

# THE EVALUATION PROCESS

## Coastal Zone Management Act Section 312 Program Evaluations

**P**rogram evaluations are an instrument to determine States': 1) achievement in addressing national goals; 2) implementation of their approved program; and 3) adherence to the terms of the federal financial assistance awards.

The Congress created the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) in 1972 which encourages a federal-state partnership to manage the nation's coastal resources in accordance with defined national objectives (CZMA§303). The CZMA also created incentives for the states to achieve these national objectives – matching funds, federal consistency and funding for resource protection, research and education. This partnership can be likened to a contractual relationship whereby NOAA provides funds to the states to assist in achieving the national objectives and the states are able to use the federal consistency provisions (CZMA§307) to ensure that federal projects or private projects requiring federal permits are conducted in accordance with state laws, regulations and policies.

As with all contractual relationships, NOAA periodically reviews federally approved programs to ensure that the terms of the “contract” are being met. This review is a program evaluation required by Section 312 of the CZMA.

**Program evaluations are part of an ongoing process** that includes detailed analysis of documents and performance reports, notice to interested parties of the evaluation requesting participation, a site visit, assessment of information gathered, report preparation and follow-up.

**Program evaluations review performance of state and territorial Coastal Management Programs (CMP) and National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRS).** CMP reviews cover overall program implementation (CZMA §306), small construction grants (CZMA §306A), program enhancements (CZMA §309) and document the state's nonpoint source initiatives (CZMA §6217). NERRS reviews cover construction, operations, research and education (CZMA §315).

### WHO CONDUCTS A §312 EVALUATION SITE VISIT?

An OCRM Evaluation Team conducts the program evaluation site visit. The team consists of:

**1...**

A program analyst from OCRM Director's Office, who serves as the Evaluation Team Leader;

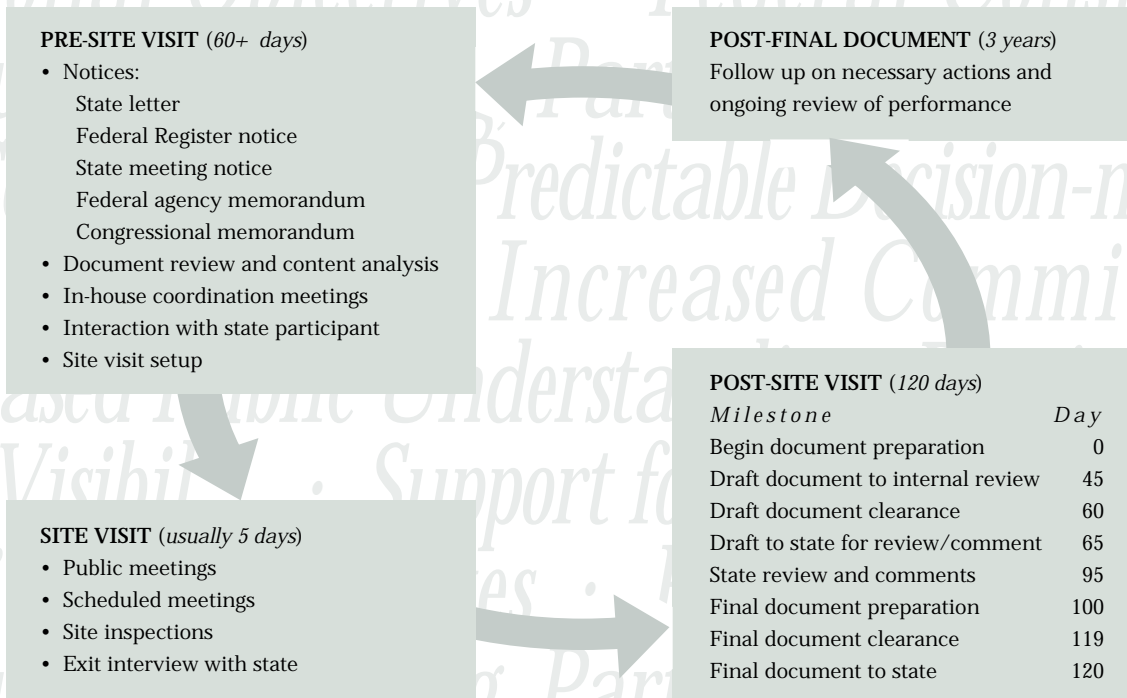
**2...**

A regional staff person from the Coastal Programs Division or Estuarine Reserves Division assigned to the CMP or NERR under review: and,

**3...**

A management official from a CMP or NERR who volunteers to participate in the evaluation site visit of another CMP or NERR.

Other OCRM or NOAA officials may participate in the site visit. If there are particular problems that require specialized expertise, another individual, such as from General Counsel or the Grants Office, may join the team.



**Program evaluations result in written findings** that document states' accomplishments as well as provides recommendations for improvements to their programs. These recommendations are of two types: necessary actions, which are actions that must be undertaken by the state to address specific problems; and program suggestions, which are actions that NOAA believes the state should undertake to improve or enhance the programs. These findings allow NOAA to work with the state to effect corrective actions. These findings also allow NOAA to support states in addressing specific needs that they would be otherwise unable to do. However, evaluations are more than a set of findings, they are an opportunity for a program to look at its own needs with a federal partner who holds a vested interest in helping the program succeed.

**Program evaluations are used as a management "tool"** to provide the state and NOAA a vehicle for accomplishing program improvements. Evaluations assist in determining priorities for correcting reoccurring deficiencies in coastal and reserve programs and have often been the supporting documentation for leveraging funds and instilling support for programs. This periodic review affords, both NOAA and the state, the opportunity to explore areas to improve public understanding and participation and enhance coastal stewardship. Finally, evaluations often open the door to foster partnerships between local, state, federal and special interest groups that have competing interests in a limited and fragile resource: our coast.

**National Ocean Service**  
"Working for America's Coasts"

